



New Maternity Direct App Launched to Support Women During Their Pregnancy

Basildon, Essex (8 August 2019) — A new app, Maternity Direct, will mean mums-to-be across Mid and South Essex will have greater peace of mind in between their scheduled midwife appointments.

Basildon Hospital has launched Maternity Direct, a free, secure, web-based app that connects mums-to-be with an NHS midwife. This is the first app to interactively connect registered NHS midwives with pregnant women for secure instant messaging chats.

The app was developed after the Trust found that women had many questions regarding their pregnancy between scheduled midwife appointments. Feedback from women found that searching online did not instill confidence, and some felt uncomfortable contacting their midwife or the maternity unit with non-urgent questions.

Set up for non-urgent enquiries, the app provides access to up-to-date, evidence-based information and advice. Mums-to-be who have registered with Basildon Hospital for their maternity care can access the chat function of the app, and a record of their chat will be available on the woman's phone and stored in the Trust's secure patient record.

The main aims of the app are to improve communication for women whilst reducing the number of unnecessary phone calls, hospital attendances, and GP appointments for non-urgent issues. Midwives can support more than one "chat message" at a time, compared with the time taken on standard telephone calls. A "midwife group chat" will also provide assurance and support.

An in-app appointment calendar offers reminders of upcoming maternity related hospital appointments to help reduce the number of missed appointments.

Clare Panniker, Chief Executive Officer at Mid and South Essex University Hospitals Group said:

"I'm very proud of the work the maternity team have done in creating the maternity direct app. To be able to chat online with a midwife and be guaranteed a response in a few hours for those issues that are not an emergency is so reassuring and will give peace of mind to women going through the normal but unexpected developments pregnancy brings. I'm confident that this app will soon be the first port of call for women all over Mid and South Essex."

At present, the "chat" and "my appointments" functions of the app are only available to women who have referred their pregnancy to Basildon Hospital although anyone can access the app as a guest for health information. Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals are part of the Mid and South Essex University Hospitals Group, and Maternity Direct will be introduced to the Southend and Mid Essex sites within the next year.

Karen Berry, Maternity Commissioner of the Acute Commissioning Team for Mid and South Essex, said: "The Maternity App has been tested by our maternity patient partners and will grow and develop, supporting the great work being undertaken in our local maternity

community. The app will also offer women information about their choice of maternity services, along with accessibility to personalised care plans and will enhance the continuity of care throughout their pregnancy journey. The development of this app forms part of the BETTER BIRTHS initiative, the aim being to improve outcomes to our mothers and babies.”

Lesley Overy, Head of Midwifery, Nursing & Quality at Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals said: “This app is a fantastic step forward to helping provide women with greater confidence during their pregnancy. With up-to-date information and a midwife to hand, women can access non-urgent support and advice when they need it. The need to organise non-urgent appointments may also be reduced, saving women time whilst protecting our appointments for those women who require closer monitoring.

The Trust partnered with software developer Acadian Limited to create Maternity Direct.

Jackie Kestenbaum, Director of Acadian Limited, said: “With Maternity Direct, pregnant women will now be able to get the answers they need easily, from a reliable, trustworthy source in the manner they are most comfortable using – on their smartphones. Maternity Direct is a wonderful software solution using telemedicine to enhance a woman’s pregnancy journey while better scaling Trust resources. It has been a delight to partner with Mid and South Essex University Hospitals Group on this important innovation.”

To access the app please go to <https://maternitydirect.btuh.nhs.uk/>

Notes to Editor:

Issued by Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Communications Office.

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